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DOCUMENT NO. 51
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH: NR TO-2
5 JUN 1980
DATE: _____ REVIEWER: _____

31 December 1959

Copy No. C 65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



State Department review completed

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Approved For Release 2003/01/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A004800510001-2

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

31 December 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

No Laos: Premier Phoui and his cabinet now are apparently ready to resign. This decision is reported to have resulted from indications that the King is prepared to accept such action. The resignation would pave the way for redesignation of Phoui as head of a nonparliamentary government including Phoui's old-guard followers as well as members of the young reformist Committee for Defense of National Interests (CDNI).

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U12 Israel-Syria: The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) fears that recent incidents along the Israeli-Syrian border--particularly the one on 24 December in which an Israeli was killed--may lead to further clashes there. On the evening of 29 December, UNTSO observed an Israeli troop movement including tanks, toward the border area near Lake Tiberias. Syrian reinforcements, including tanks, have also been dispatched to the border.

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area. Neither the Israeli nor the UAR press, however, has given heavy play to the recent border actions. While further local incidents can be expected, there seems little likelihood of a significant clash at this time.) (Page 2)

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Cameroun: The French-administered UN trust territory of Cameroun, which becomes independent on 1 January, will retain, at least for the present, close ties with France under a series of provisional cooperation agreements. Cameroun, an underdeveloped country of about 3,200,000 people, emerges with internal problems which pose a serious threat to political stability. A major threat to the government is the continuing and apparently increasing terrorist activity, supported by external Communist sources, in the southwest.

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Ethiopia - British Somaliland: British officials in Ethiopia fear that the deteriorating situation along the Ethiopian - British Somaliland border, where a number of Ethiopian troops and nomadic Somali tribesmen have been killed in clashes this month, will further exacerbate relations between London and Addis Ababa. An additional source of misunderstanding will arise when Britain implements its plans to accelerate the protectorate's political evolution by giving Somalis considerable executive responsibility in the new protectorate government to be formed after elections in February. Addis Ababa is concerned that any moves toward autonomy in British Somaliland will encourage Somali hopes for a "Greater Somalia" state which would include large portions of Ethiopian territory.)

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(Page 4) (Map)

III. THE WEST

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Austria-Italy: The recent decision of the Italian Government to bar from Italy three prominent Austrian leaders of the South Tirol autonomy movement has increased the influence of extremists on both sides of the South Tirolean dispute. The

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[Italian ambassador in Vienna, who had tried to persuade Rome to reconsider this "stupid move," believes the strong Austrian reaction will discourage Rome from offering to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice and will force Vienna to attempt to obtain a UN General Assembly hearing in 1960. Even the moderate press in Austria is urging the Vienna government to break off talks with Italy and come out in support of full self-determination for the South Tirol.]

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[Redacted]

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

Laotian Government Apparently Ready to Resign

[Premier Phoui and his cabinet now are apparently ready to resign, following indications from King Savang that he has switched his position and would accept such action. Savang had previously refused to entertain an offer by Phoui to resign on the ground that his cabinet had ceased to exist upon expiration of the National Assembly's mandate on 25 December. Savang's change of mind would presumably obviate the necessity for Phoui's old-guard assembly supporters to humiliate themselves by signing a public declaration that they had been in error in interpreting the constitution and a 1957 electoral law in such a way as to extend parliamentary government in Laos beyond 25 December.]

[The resignation of the Phoui government, which the American Embassy in Vientiane now considers almost certain, would pave the way for the redesignation of Phoui as the head of a non-parliamentary government which would include Phoui's followers as well as the young reformist Committee for Defense of National Interests (CDNI). The King is reported to be favorably disposed toward such a solution to the present crisis.]

[While the immediate impasse between the Phoui group and the CDNI would thus appear to be nearing resolution, the hard feelings generated during the crisis may seriously hamper cooperation between the two groups in preparing for national elections. The timing of such elections still seems to be uncertain, but now that the CDNI has won its point on the question of the outgoing assembly's tenure, it may be content to go along with Phoui's desire to postpone them until December 1960.]

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Israeli-Syrian Border Incidents

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[Recent incidents along the Israeli-Syrian border and an exchange of propaganda recriminations between Israel and the UAR have heightened tension in the border area. On the evening of 29 December UNTSO observed Israeli troops moving from the direction of Haifa to Tiberias. The convoy was estimated to include one company of tanks, a company of heavy mortars, and 150 trucks carrying possibly two battalions of infantry.]

[On 24 December, a fight in the demilitarized zone south-east of Lake Tiberias resulted in the death of one Israeli. The fight occurred when the Israelis started laying irrigation pipe near an Arab village despite the objections of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). This clash has caused the Israeli press to charge that the Syrians are engaged in a systematic effort to provoke Israeli forces. An Israeli official had complained earlier about Syrian destruction of Israeli fishing nets on the shore of Lake Tiberias and said that "failure" by the UNTSO to stop such depredations would force Israel to take "police action."]

[UNTSO officials believe that the UAR First Army in Syria is the principal source of potential trouble. The Syrians may have been incited by the UAR's propaganda attacking Israel's unilateral plans for utilizing Jordan River waters. Although there is no firm evidence of unusual military movements in Syria, [REDACTED] reinforcements including tanks, were dispatched to the Israeli border region from Damascus. The Syrian side of the border rises almost a thousand feet above Israeli territory, providing a significant tactical advantage which the Syrians have previously used in artillery exchanges.] [REDACTED]

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Independent Cameroun Faces Serious Internal Problems

The French-administered UN trust territory of Cameroun becomes independent on 1 January, the first of at least five heretofore dependent African countries due to attain sovereign status during 1960. It is also the first trust territory to become independent, a fact pointed up by UN Secretary General Hammarskjold's trip to West Africa to attend the ceremonies which begin in Yaoundé on 31 December. Several Soviet bloc delegations, including three from the USSR, will be present in response to the invitation extended to all UN members.

For the present at least, Cameroun will retain close ties with France. Prime Minister Ahidjo has initialed agreements providing for diplomatic, military, economic, and technical cooperation with Paris during the first six months of Cameroun's independence. It is clearly the hope both of Ahidjo and the French that these accords will then be put on a more permanent basis, but this hope is likely to be frustrated should more nationalistically inclined Camerounian elements gain power in the elections Ahidjo has promised for February or March.

The new state, an underdeveloped country slightly larger than California with a population of approximately 3,200,000 people, faces internal problems which pose a serious threat to its political stability and orderly development. A basic cleavage exists between the conservative Moslem traditionalists of the north and the Christian and pagan radicals who dominate politics in the south. More pressing, however, is the continuing and apparently increasing terrorist activity in southwestern Cameroun by elements of the important Bamileke tribe. Although this unrest among the Bamileke appears to be mainly social and economic in origin, it is nevertheless being exploited successfully by anti-Ahidjo extremists associated with the outlawed nationalist movement, the Union of the Cameroons Population. [Countermeasures by the government have so far not proved effective, and the attacking bands, which are [REDACTED] [REDACTED] financed in part by Sino-Soviet bloc countries, appear to be growing in size.] [REDACTED]

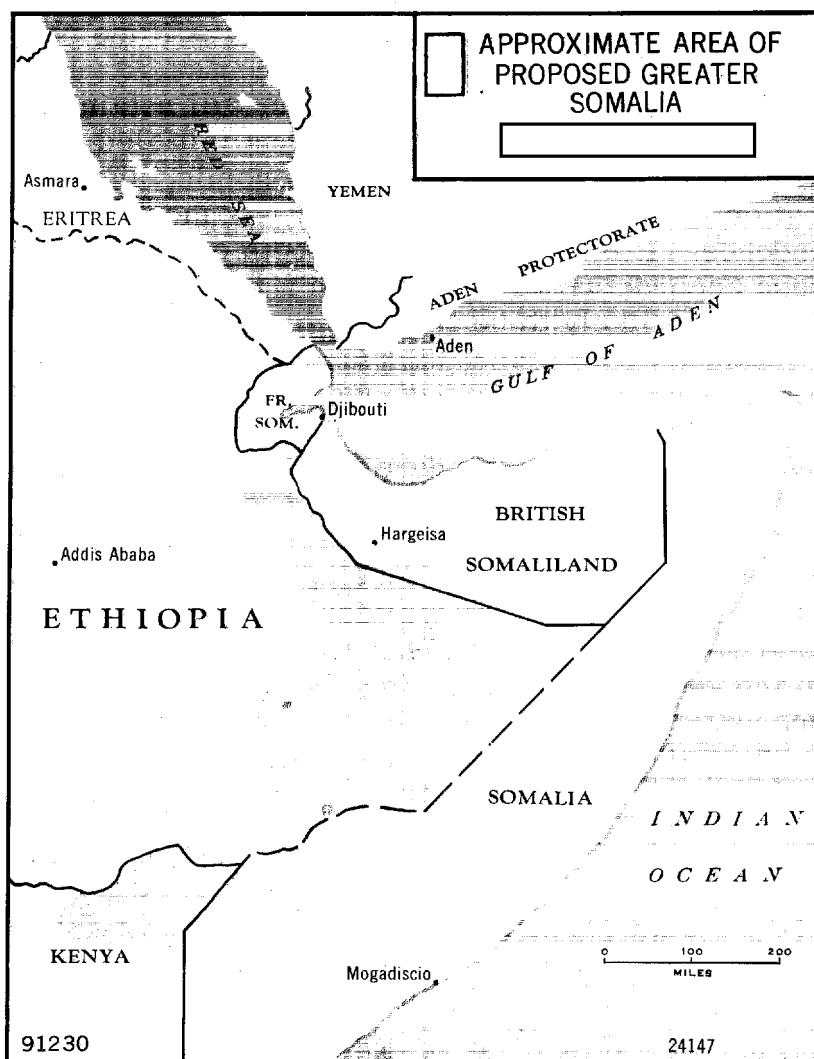
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Tension Increasing Between Britain and Ethiopia

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The flare-up in incidents this month between Ethiopian authorities and nomadic tribesmen from the British protectorate of Somaliland has aggravated tensions between Addis Ababa and London. Clashes in Ethiopian territory close to the border have resulted in a number of deaths among Ethiopian troops and armed Somali tribesmen. Recently Ethiopia asked Britain to disarm Somali protectorate tribesmen who enter Ethiopia and warned that it would not take the responsibility for any incidents if Britain refused. The British are reluctant to order such disarming, however, since the Somalis claim they would be slaughtered if they entered Ethiopian areas unarmed.]

The tribal border tension is part of the larger problem of Ethiopia's relations with its Moslem Somali neighbors. Addis Ababa fears the creation of a "Greater Somali" state uniting all Somali tribesmen, because this would deprive Ethiopia of considerable territory. The Ethiopians have interpreted several London statements about British Somaliland's future as support for a "Greater Somalia." Further tension between Ethiopia and Britain will arise from implementation of reported British plans to accelerate the protectorate's political evolution. The Somalis would be given several ministerial portfolios in a new government to be established following elections in February in preparation for protectorate independence, possibly by 1963.]

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